

CAMPUS SECURITY: Using Incident Reporting to Measure and Report ROI

When it comes to campus safety, spending has traditionally been a murky area. Underspensing can be a recipe for disaster: if your safety department is strapped for resources, your campus becomes more vulnerable to threats. The desire to balance budget restrictions with safety concerns raises several questions: How do you determine if you're over or underspensing? What is an appropriate budget for your campus safety department? Establishing an ROI for security spending has always been difficult since a conventional "return" can't be calculated. The real payoff comes in the form of preventing loss of revenue—whether it be due to damaged property; a tarnished reputation, resulting in lower enrollment; or worse, lawsuits due to injury or even death of students, faculty, or staff.



THE PRICE OF PREVENTION

Putting a price tag on prevention isn't easy. Across a variety of industries, security spending has historically relied on recommendations rather than concrete figures. New technology, however, has made it easier than ever for administrators to evaluate the benefits of security expenditures. Now it's possible for campus safety departments to utilize technology to effectively measure and record efforts and outcomes, justify budget requests, and ensure funds are being spent responsibly.

Incident reporting software can help campus safety departments maximize efficiency by automating the incident reporting process and facilitating accurate record-keeping of campus safety incidents. Incident reporting solutions with searchable databases make it easy to pull valuable details from incident reports, such as common locations for criminal activity or names of repeat offenders.

In the new economic climate facing many colleges and universities, campus safety departments are challenged to do more with less, effectively demonstrate their value, and show what services are provided within the institution's public safety budget. With the right technology and tracking tools, all the information needed during the budget process is readily available and easily accessible.

A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF SERVICES PROVIDED

What information should your campus safety department be able to provide?

Making knowledgeable budgeting decisions requires an accurate understanding of the services being provided by campus safety, the results of those efforts, and how departmental resources are being utilized.

Clerical tasks—like completing paperwork, filing case reports, following up on unpaid citations, and creating departmental schedules—are necessary, but they also take campus safety staff away from their primary duty: keeping students, faculty, and staff safe.

Implementing a software solution designed to help automate reporting, organization, and managerial functions can help minimize time spent on these types of tasks.

Many campus safety departments also perform duties that fall outside the traditional scope of campus safety such as conducting safety training for other staff. These additional accomplishments and duties should be included in a breakdown of the department's activities. When possible, campus safety directors should associate a dollar amount to activities—how much would it cost to hire an outside agency to provide a service the department offers? This information can help provide budget guidelines and establish a frame of reference demonstrating the value of the department.

JUSTIFICATION FOR BUDGET REQUESTS & INCREASES IN STAFF

With an accurate breakdown of services in hand, it becomes easier for campus safety departments to demonstrate where additional resources are needed. Incident reporting software documents increases in requests for service and can also help identify patterns in these increases. If resources are strained, the campus safety director can use the data from an incident reporting software suite to accurately pinpoint the cause and determine how to effectively alleviate it.

Realistically, there are far more institutions looking at their budgets to determine where to make cuts rather than where to increase funding; however, accessibility to specific data can offer insight into strained resources and provide clarity for identifying solutions. For example, if calls for service increase on Friday nights, the department can simply adjust schedules for a full staff on Friday night rather than adding another full-time campus safety officer to the team.

CAMPUS CRIME TRENDS, ANALYSIS, & PREDICTIONS

Tracking criminal incidents that occur on campus not only aids the budgeting process, it helps build a safer campus community and assists with planning for the future. The best incident reporting software doesn't just make it faster and easier to compile reports and maintain Clery and Title IX compliance, it also organizes all incident data into a live dashboard that provides campus safety with a more accurate picture of what's happening on campus.

Data visualization provided by an interactive dashboard allows you to:

- ▶ Pinpoint campus crime hotspots
- ▶ Identify incident trends on your campus
- ▶ View time periods experiencing higher rates of criminal activity

Having access to this level of insight enables your campus safety department to work more efficiently and dedicate resources to incident prevention. Proactive measures based on data-driven intelligence helps create a safer environment and saves money. Investigation and response require more resources than prevention—and reducing the occurrence of incidents limits reputational damage due to campus crime.



DEPARTMENTAL AUDITS & RESPONSE TIMES

While the breakdown of activities and services demonstrates how campus safety department resources are allocated, a system audit is a supplemental report that provides in-depth detail on department activity. With the right incident reporting software suite, generating a departmental audit is easy. Furthermore, if the software suite incorporates all the tools a campus safety department needs to complete their duties, the software's audit will provide a nearly complete account of how the members of the departments spend their time on the job. Detailed audits are a valuable asset for identifying waste on a departmental level as well as an individual level. Audits can also be useful for employee reviews and staff reward programs.

Your campus safety department's response times also play an important role in budgeting. While level of severity can factor into incident response time, in general, longer response times indicate an issue in the department's operations. Taking a closer look at response times and departmental audits can help pinpoint opportunities for improvement in the department's operational processes.

CAMPUS SAFETY MUST BE A TOP PRIORITY

Creating a safe campus environment is the main goal of—and the primary reason for—campus safety departments. Amidst budget talks and organization politics, it's easy to lose sight of this goal, yet a safe campus should always be the top priority for the campus safety department as well as the university administration.

Balancing budget restrictions with safety concerns can be challenging for university administrators and budget planners, especially in the current economic climate. Accurately assessing a campus safety budget can be even more difficult without a law enforcement or security background. Fortunately, technology is making the budget process easier by helping campus safety directors prove the value of their department.



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